



Kimberly A. Foster
Executive Director

LOS ANGELES COUNTY COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

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DR. HARRIETTE F. WILLIAMS

APPROVED MINUTES

The General Meeting of the Commission for Children and Families was held on Monday, **August 17, 2009**, in Room 739 of the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration, 500 West Temple Street, Los Angeles. **Please note that these minutes are intended as a summary and not as a verbatim accounting or transcription of events at this meeting.**

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT (Quorum Established)

Patricia Curry	Steven M. Olivas, Esq.
Ann Franzen	Martha Trevino Powell
Susan Friedman	Sandra Rudnick
Helen Kleinberg	Stacey Savelle
Dr. La-Doris McClaney	Dr. Harriette F. Williams
Rev. Cecil Murray	

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT (Excused/Unexcused)

Carol O. Biondi	Adelina Sorkin
Tina Pedersen	

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Curry.

II. INTRODUCTIONS

Self introductions were made.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Action

Motion by Commissioner McClaney, seconded by Commissioner Rudnick, the Agenda for August 17, 2009 was unanimously approved.

IV. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- **August 3, 2009**

Action

Motion by Commissioner Williams, seconded by Commissioner McClaney, the Minutes for August 3, 2009 were unanimously approved.

V. CHAIR'S REPORT

In Chair Sorkin's absence, the meeting was chaired by Vice Chair Curry. She reported that Commissioner McClaney has volunteered to Chair the Retreat Committee. Commissioner McClaney stated that she will host the Commission Retreat at her Estate. Vice Chair Curry stated the date has not yet been determined.

Vice Chair Curry also reported that the Executive Committee has established two short-term informational Ad Hoc Committees, one on DCFS' Front End Procedures, for children entering the system, and the second on DCFS Budget Information. Commissioners interested in participating on these Ad Hoc Committees should contact Chair Sorkin, Vice Chair Curry, or Executive Director Kim Foster.

VI. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Kim Foster reported that she attended the last meeting of the Children's Council where it was announced that effective September 30, 2009, the Children's Council will no longer exist in its current form as a County entity and Sharon Watson's official last day is October 16, 2009. The Chair of the Council's non-profit entity acknowledged Ms. Watson for her work with the Council. The Chair also stated that the non-profit component will continue its community-based work with the SPA Councils and Neighborhood Action Council.

Vice Chair Curry stated that she spoke to Ms. Watson, who indicated that she has already left. Vice Chair Curry suggested inviting Ms. Watson to a future Commission meeting to acknowledge her contributions and collaboration with the Commission. She also suggested inviting Colleen Mooney to discuss continuing the community networking and established community liaisons. Vice Chair Curry suggested the Commission discuss whether to take over the Joint Children's Commissions Workgroup previously led by the Children's Council. One of the issues addressed by this group is prevention, which is also one of the Commission's priorities.

Vice Chair Curry announced that Miguel Santana has left the CEO's office and Ms. Foster stated that Jackie White has been appointed as the DCEO for the Children and Families' Well-Being Cluster.

Public Comment

Garrison Smith, from the CEO's office, stated that Ms. White has been in the County for 37 years, most recently in the CEO, and has extensive County experience.

Follow-Up

Commissioner Friedman requested that the Executive Director attend the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, August 18, 2009 and report back to the Commission on the following Agenda items: #4 - Independent Special Investigation into the deaths of Dae'Von Bailey, Jasmine Granados and Lars Sanchez; #52 - Hiring of Children Special Investigation Unit (CSIU); #53 - Review and evaluation of SDM and CSW caseload; and #55 - Report regarding progress on Family and Child Index (FCI).

VII. COMMISSION DISCUSSION – FIVE PRIORITIES

Vice Chair Curry gave the following brief update on the progress of the CEO/Commission Workgroups on the Commission's five priority areas:

- 1) Transitional Age Youth (TAY) – Vice Chair Curry, Commissioner Savelle, and Garrison Smith, CEO, have conducted several meetings and will continue to meet.
- 2) Crossover – Commissioner Biondi, Vice Chair Curry, and Garrison Smith are working on this.
- 3) Prevention – Commissioner Rudnick has been working with the Children's Council on this area and now needs a contact person with the CEO.
- 4) Relative Caregiver – Chair Sorkin and Commissioner Franzen will be working with Karen Herberts and Brian Mahan, CEO.
- 5) Wellness – On August 20, 2009, Commissioner Pedersen and Chair Sorkin will be meeting with the group created as a result of the Board Motion on Well-Being.

Commissioner Curry stated that there will be future updates on these groups' progress.

Follow-Up

Garrison Smith, the facilitator for the CEO Workgroups, will research who the CEO contact person is for the Prevention Workgroup and provide that information to the Executive Director.

VIII. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

DCFS Director, Trish Ploehn provided an update on the State budget reporting that a final decision was made by the State regarding Title IV-E Waiver budget cuts. Director Ploehn stated that a letter was submitted to the State providing the justifications for exempting the County against cutting Title IV-E Waiver funds and was rejected by the State. This decision will result in a \$7.1 million dollar loss of State waiver funds; however, the Federal and County governments will continue to contribute their portions. Karen Bass has committed to continue the fight against the State cuts to child welfare funding. Vice Chair Curry asked Director Ploehn if the Commission might be provided with a copy of the letter submitted to the State opposing the Waiver cuts. Director Ploehn stated that she will provide a redacted version of the letter in the form of a fact-sheet, and would appreciate the support of the Commission on this issue.

The reduction of funds also includes those used by DCFS to extend the contract series, Alternative Services for Youth, which was due to end on June 30, 2009. DCFS is continuing this program for an additional six month period (July 1, 2009-December 31, 2009). This program provides direct services across the county for youth exiting the system

and DCFS is also working on releasing a Request for Proposal (RFP) to narrow the program's scope of services to education.

Director Ploehn stated there will also be an additional 10% reduction that Foster Family Agencies (FFAs) and Group Homes will incur. DCFS is discussing ways to attempt to mitigate these cuts by having the agencies increase activity in areas such as Team Decision Making (TDMs), reunifications, and aftercare services, which would allow DCFS to provide the agencies with more waiver funds. They are also discussing removing some administrative mandates that would not impact services to children and families. Vice Chair Curry expressed concern over the removal of these mandates and requested a list of those being considered for removal.

Director Ploehn commented on a recent media report regarding three child deaths and stated that she is not able to discuss these cases in detail; however, she stated that DCFS is taking a proactive approach and is conducting in-depth investigations.

Vice Chair Curry inquired if they may receive a copy of the report to the Board of Supervisors on the 14 child deaths in 2008. Director Ploehn stated that if the report has gone to the Board, it is a public document and will be made available to the Commission.

Commissioner Kleinberg inquired of Director Ploehn how the lessons learned on the systemic issues of the child fatality cases is being integrated to improve the system. Brian Bruker, DCFS replied that they are involved in roundtable discussions where information is shared and will be integrated into quality improvement.

In addition, DCFS has been working on the:

- Quality Improvement Section, which Brian Bruker is giving a presentation on today;
- Emergency Response (ER) Academy, which Eric Marts will be presenting to the Commission on October 5; and
- Joint Response Investigation Process, where, in agreements with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department (LASD), Social Workers will respond to calls together with law enforcement. They will conduct one set of interviews and have one response. They are also working on emulating the LASD investigation and report writing process.

Commissioner Savelle inquired if the Joint Response effort will be utilized for all cases. In addition, Commissioner Savelle asked for a copy of the ER Academy curriculum and handouts. Director Ploehn stated that at this time the Joint Response is a pilot in the ER Unit only. She also agreed to provide a copy of the ER Academy curriculum and handouts.

Commissioner Williams alerted Director Ploehn of the discontinuance of a training program for Relative Caregivers that was developed by Eileen Pastor. She stated that this training program has been very successful and is nationally recognized as a program to emulate. She also stated that she is in the process of meeting with DCFS staff to address her concerns regarding the discontinuance of this training.

Commissioner Kleinberg inquired why law enforcement was the first priority for collaboration in Joint Response rather than health issues. Director Ploehn stated that Joint Response is coordinated with law enforcement as they are currently required to respond and have a process in place. This makes the collaboration merely a coordination of services to respond together. She stated that for Public Health Nurses, they are not currently able to respond to front-end cases, only cases already in care. Vice Chair Curry stated that they may address this issue in more detail with DCFS during the Front-End Ad Hoc Committee meeting.

Follow-Up

Director Ploehn will provide the justifications sent to the State used to argue the cuts for the Title IV-E Waiver, and the list of County mandates being considered for removal from the FFAs and Group Homes.

Cassandra Turner will forward copies of all available public reports submitted to the Board of Supervisors on the 14 child deaths. She will also forward copies of the ER Academy curriculum and handouts.

IX. PRESENTATION – QUALITY ASSURANCE AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

DCFS' Brian Bruker, LCSW, gave a brief overview of his career, experience and assignments at DCFS during his 20 year tenure. He also provided a brief summary of the new Quality Improvement Section in the DCFS Bureau of Strategic Management. In the Quality Improvement Section, there are a total of eight Children's Services Administrators whose approach is to look at organizational learning with prioritization from the Quality Improvement Steering Committee.

Mr. Bruker indicated that DCFS is currently working on an Emergency Response (ER) Study which will be completed in the following two phases:

PHASE ONE – A record review of over 600 referrals, 30 referrals per office, randomly selected using a comprehensive tool addressing 52 possible dimensions of an ER investigation that make up the current policy and best practices. The time period covered in the sample review is from January 1, 2009 through March 31, 2009. They are currently completing the record reviews and will debrief each ER Manager with the preliminary findings for their office.

Commissioner Savelle requested a copy of the record review tool used in Phase One of the ER Study. Mr. Bruker indicated he would forward the information. Commissioner Trevino-Powell inquired how much notice is given before visiting an office for a record review. Mr. Bruker stated that a memo is released to all offices with a schedule/timeline; some offices may get three days, while others get three weeks.

PHASE TWO – Qualitative case interviews will be conducted, as well as "ride-alongs" with the ER Children's Services Workers that were included in the record review. The interview tool will be administered in a manner similar to the Peer Quality Case Review and should produce a richer, multi-dimensional picture.

Mr. Bruker reported that DCFS is also conducting a Successful Family Reunification Study as a follow-up to the Re-Entry Study previously requested by the Commission. This study will utilize a similar methodology consisting of a matching cohort sample of children from families who successfully reunified within the same time period (FY 2006-2007), and have not re-entered the child welfare system. The goal of the study would be to make comparison findings and identify those elements of practice and service that predict successful reunification. They have recently completed interviews with 60 Social Workers and Supervising Social Workers and will be engaging service providers such as family preservation agencies as well as Association of Community Human Services Agencies (ACHSA).

Commissioner Trevino Powell inquired if the children and families included in the study would also be interviewed. Mr. Bruker stated that parents, youth, and caregivers will be interviewed; and unlike the Re-entry Study where interviews were conducted over the telephone, they will conduct face-to-face interviews as much as possible.

Commissioner Savelle inquired if the input previously provided by the Commission regarding the Family Reunification Re-Entry Study, such as the recommendation to conduct face-to-face interviews, was received. Mr. Bruker stated that Commissioner Kleinberg is on their Workgroup and she provided the Commission's input to the process.

Commissioner Trevino Powell suggested that Mr. Bruker return to the Commission to report on the outcomes of the ER and Successful Reunification Studies. Mr. Bruker agreed to return after November when both studies have been completed.

Mr. Bruker stated that another long range activity of the Quality Improvement Section is to conduct a Qualitative Service Review (QSR). The QSR is one of the components of the County's exit criteria from the Katie A. lawsuit and will entail the development of a protocol and instrument and will look at the Child Status Indicators and System Performance Indicators. Child Status Indicators include: safety, stability, physical/emotional well-being, learning and development, prospects for permanence, caregiver functioning, family resourcefulness, and general satisfaction with care. System Performance Indicators include: child and family engagement, team coordination, assessment, long-term view, planning, implementation, tracking and adjustment, cultural accommodations, support availability, and overall performance.

Mr. Bruker stated that monthly Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) meetings for Self-Assessment are also conducted, which was a requirement of the implementation and roll-out plan of the Concurrent Planning Redesign (CPR). Quality Improvement teams are also sent to Region and Program Offices to conduct field visits, take inventory of what is being done to manage improvements, and conduct forums to develop, organize and sell new ideas. In addition, they provide support for the Peer Quality Case Review (PQCR) and participate in Critical Incident Child Fatality Roundtables.

Vice Chair Curry inquired if the questions used in the Successful Reunification Study interviews are uniform for all participants as well as the level of staff who will conduct the interviews. Mr. Bruker stated that the questions asked are uniform for all and he will

provide the Commission with a list of the questions used. He also stated that the Social Workers on the Quality Improvement Team will be asking the questions and they will give both the parents and the youth the choice of individual or group interviews. Vice Chair Curry stated that in the past, questions were not always geared towards the youth nor understood by youth. Also, the youth were not always willing to communicate with Social Workers and she suggested that youth may be more receptive to using peers in interviews. Vice Chair Curry also recommended conducting an Adoption Study to include interviewing adoption participants to see if they are still in place or not. Also, if the adoption is not in place, why it's not and whether they have re-entered the system. Cassandra Turner stated that there is an existing Adoption Study and she will provide the information to the Commission.

The Executive Director inquired if there were any legal restrictions to obtaining information on adoptions. Vice Chair Curry stated they do not anticipate any problem as they are not requesting any personal information, and Brian Bruker concurred.

Follow-Up

Mr. Bruker agreed to return to the Commission after November to report on the outcomes of the ER and Successful Reunification Studies.

Cassandra Turner will provide a copy of the audit tool used in Phase One of the ER Study, a copy of the Adoption Study including re-entry information for adoptions/non-adoptions, whether they were successful or not, if not, why not and if they have re-entered the system, and the list of questions used in the Successful Family Reunification Study interview process.

Commissioner Williams requested more information regarding the new Front-End and Budget Ad Hoc Committees. Vice Chair Curry stated that there are no definite plans yet.

Commissioner McClaney made an inquiry of the Commission for a date for the Retreat. Vice Chair Curry suggested Commissioner McClaney present to the Commission the dates that she is available.

X. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment.

XI. ANNOUNCEMENTS

No Announcements.

XII. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned by Vice Chair Curry.